



# NEWTON CORNER

LONG-TERM PLANNING STUDY

## MassDOT Newton Corner Long-Term Planning Study

### Working Group Meeting #3

Wednesday, February 5, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.

Virtual on Zoom

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#### Summary:

On Wednesday, February 5, 2025, MassDOT held the third Working Group meeting for the Newton Corner Long-Term Planning Study. At this meeting, the Study Team presented a summary of Public Information Meeting #1 comments; future conditions; issues, opportunities, and constraints; preliminary alternatives development; and schedule and next steps. Members of the Working Group and members of the public who attended participated in breakout room sessions and provided feedback.

#### Attendees:

Name	Title	Affiliation
Benjamin Muller	District Planner for District 6	MassDOT
Drashti Joshi	Civil Engineer	MassDOT
Dan Fielding	Legislative Liaison	MassDOT Highway Division
Manuel Pires	Traffic Engineer	MassDOT Department of Conservation & Recreation
Jason Santos	Director of Transportation Engineering	MassDOT Department of Conservation & Recreation
Robert Lowell	Civil Engineer	MassDOT Department of Conservation & Recreation
John Cavanaro	Civil Engineer	MassDOT Department of Conservation & Recreation
Sandy Johnston	Deputy Director of Regional Transit Planning	MBTA
Jonathan Yeo	Chief Operating Officer	City of Newton Mayor's Office
John Oliver	Councilor at Large	City of Newton City Council (Ward 1)
Alison Leary	Councilor at Large	City of Newton City Council (Ward 1)

Julia Malakie	Ward Councilor	City of Newton City Council (Ward 3)
Pam Wright	Councilor at Large	City of Newton City Council (Ward 3)
Amy Sangiolo	State Representative	State Representative Amy Sangiolo (11 <sup>th</sup> Middlesex – Newton)
Steve Owens	State Representative	State Representative Steven Owens (29 <sup>th</sup> Middlesex – Watertown)
Dana Hanson	District Director	Office of U.S. Representative Jake Auchincloss (Massachusetts District 4)
Annie Mazzola	District Director	Office of State Senator William Brownsberger (Suffolk and Middlesex)
Garrett Casey	Policy Director and Counsel	Office of State Senator Cynthia Creem (Norfolk and Middlesex)
David Koses	Transportation Coordinator	City of Newton Department of Public Works
Ned Codd	Director of Transportation	City of Newton Department of Public Works
Jenn Martin	Director of Transportation Planning	City of Newton Department of Planning and Development
Jini Fairley	ADA Coordinator	City of Newton
Joan Belle Isle	Chair	City of Newton Council on Aging/Executive Committee
Michael Halle	Chair	City of Newton Transportation Advisory Group
Lucia Dolan	Member	Safe Routes to School
Robin Boger	President	Newton Corner Neighborhood Association
Wenzheng Wang	Transportation Program Planner	Boston Transportation Department on behalf of City of Boston Mayor's Office
Zeke Mermell	Senior Transportation Planner	City of Watertown on behalf of the City Manager's Office
Sophia Galimore	Director	Watertown TMA
Nate Gibson	Not Listed	Attendee
Dennis Rieske	Not Listed	Attendee
Joe Zissman	Not Listed	Attendee
Seth Parker	Not Listed	Attendee

Steven Carter	Not Listed	Attendee
Nancy Felts	Not Listed	Attendee
Schuyler Larrabee	Not Listed	Attendee
Jacquelyn Goddard	MassDOT Communications	MassDOT
Rufen Liao	Not Listed	Attendee
Madelyn Sorensen	Not Listed	Attendee
Bea Goldsmith	Not Listed	Attendee
Dylan Tanouye	Not Listed	Attendee
John Osorio	Not Listed	Attendee
Adrian Ayala	Not Listed	Attendee
Henry Barbaro	Not Listed	Attendee
Michael Pavan	Not Listed	Attendee
Carol Bates	Not Listed	Attendee
Diane Diianni	Not Listed	Attendee
Patrick Snyder	Study Project Manager	MassDOT
Rachel Kelly	Study Team Member	MassDOT
Christine Trearchis	Study Team Member	VHB
Niki Hastings	Study Team Member	VHB
Matt Duranleau	Study Team Member	VHB
Michael Gordon	Study Team Member	VHB
Michael Ahillen	Study Team Member	FHI Studio / IMEG

## Presentation

The following sections are copied from the presentation slides. A summary of discussions from the breakout rooms and comment period is provided below.

## Introduction

### *Agenda*

1. Welcome
2. Public Information Meeting #1 Summary
3. Future Conditions
4. Issues, Opportunities & Constraints

5. Alternatives Development
6. Schedule and Next Steps
7. Open Discussion
  - Working Group Discussion
  - Public Comment Period

#### *Working Group Ground Rules*

- ▶ All participants are requested to listen to the opinions of others in an effort to ensure a constructive and productive discussion.
- ▶ Members of the Working Group are asked to make every possible effort to attend the meetings consistently. However, if members are unable to attend, they should let the study team know if an alternate representative will participate on their behalf.
- ▶ All participants are asked to turn their computer notifications off and mute their cell phones and other electronic devices during meetings.
- ▶ For virtual meetings, Working Group members are allowed to show video and may keep their video on or off during the meeting. Meeting staff may mute you or turn off your video if the audio/video becomes distracting. All virtual Working Group meetings will be recorded.

#### *Study Goals*

- ▶ Improve access, safety, and mobility for all
- ▶ Reconnect Newton's neighborhoods
- ▶ Enhance quality of life
- ▶ Promote sustainable transportation solutions
- ▶ Develop actionable recommendations

### Public Meeting #1 Feedback Summary

#### *Public Meeting #1 Summary*

- ▶ Over 50 attendees
- ▶ Audience asked poll question:
  - If you could envision the future of Newton Corner, what word would you use to describe it?
- ▶ Nearly 30 questions and comments during the Q&A with common themes:
  - Traffic and Infrastructure Improvements
  - Accessibility and Connectivity
  - Environmental and Social Impacts
  - Economic Development

## Future Conditions

### *Future Mobility: Growth & Land Use Changes*

- ▶ Growth based on both CTPS Statewide Travel Demand Model and pipeline development projects.
- ▶ There are currently 56 known development projects in the local study area, including over 5,000 residential units and 6.3 million square feet of office, lab, and retail space.

### *Future Mobility: Transit*

- ▶ Planned transit improvements include:
  - Newton Commuter Rail Stations Accessibility Improvements (funding for Newtonville awarded in late 2024)
  - Bus Network Redesign
  - Rail Modernization
- ▶ Up to 42 MBTA buses per hour may serve Newton Corner in the future with Bus Network Redesign.
- ▶ Transit will play an important future role in moving new residents and workers in and around the local study area.

### *Future Mobility: Infrastructure Investments*

- ▶ Planned roadway improvements include:
  - Newton Corner short-term improvements (implemented in Fall 2024)
  - Leo Birmingham Parkway Reconstruction
  - North Beacon Street at Soldier's Field Road Roadway Realignment
  - Washington Street Pilot
  - Watertown Square Area Plan
  - Allston Multimodal Project
- ▶ Proposed roadway investments primarily focus on safety and improving multimodal accommodations.

### *Future Mobility: Active Transportation*

- ▶ Proposed/planned bicycle facilities will add new east/west routes on Washington Street, Mt. Auburn Street, Birmingham Parkway, and the Watertown Greenway.
- ▶ In the future, gaps may remain in the network, including a lack of north-south connections across I-90 and connections to the Charles River pathways.

### *Future Mobility: Volume Growth*

- ▶ CTPS Statewide Travel Demand Model used to estimate volume growth between 2019 and 2050.
- ▶ The 2050 model includes known transit and roadway infrastructure projects and projected land use growth.
- ▶ Output from the model was calibrated based on known development projects.
- ▶ Transit volumes are anticipated to grow quicker than vehicle volumes due improved transit infrastructure and limited capacity on roadway network for additional demand.

### *Future Mobility: Volumes / Intersections*

- ▶ Future vehicular volume projections have been incorporated into the 2050 mobility analysis models.
- ▶ Known infrastructure projects have been incorporated into the analysis models.
- ▶ By 2050, vehicle operations in the local study area are expected to deteriorate due to projected increases in population and employment.
- ▶ If left unaddressed, this growth will impact reliability potentially leading to increased congestion or further extending commuter peak periods.

### *Future Environmental Considerations*

- ▶ Newton Corner faces significant risks from extreme temperature fluctuations, increased precipitation, and flooding along the Charles River.
- ▶ By 2050, the area will see significant temperature increases with fewer cold days and more hot days, and rising precipitation levels.
- ▶ Resilience and Mitigation Strategies:
  - Enhance infrastructure with heat-resistant materials.
  - Integrate green infrastructure to manage stormwater.

### *Issues, Opportunities & Constraints*

#### *Sources*

- ▶ Based on a review of:
  - Data
  - Previous studies
  - Input from Working Group
  - Public outreach process
  - Online mapping tool
- ▶ Summarized in site-specific and general themes.

#### *Issues, Opportunities, and Constraints Key Takeaways*

- ▶ Roadway Geometry & Safety Issue: Confusing travel patterns with difficult merges and weaves
- ▶ Transit Opportunity: Leverage existing and future MBTA transit services (bus and Commuter Rail).
- ▶ Natural & Historic Resources Constraint: Historic districts are located just south of Newton Corner
- ▶ Climate Issue: Study area is likely to face significant climate risks, including extreme temperatures and flooding
- ▶ Active Transportation Opportunity: Connect to existing Charles River pathways – 10 minute walk or 5 minute bike ride
- ▶ Vehicle Network Constraint: Lack of access points along I-90 required vehicles to funnel through Newton Corner
- ▶ Accessibility Issue: Several intersections are lacking crosswalks or do not meet accessibility requirements

- ▶ Environmental Opportunity: Expanding green infrastructure can help manage stormwater, reduce heat island effects, and improve public health
- ▶ Transportation Infrastructure Constraint: I-90 and the MBTA rail line act as a barrier for north-south mobility

## Alternatives Development

### *Preliminary Alternatives Development*

Three levels of alternative development

- ▶ Supportive Elements
  - Supportive elements that should be considered under all alternatives
  - Examples of Supportive Elements are categorized by Pedestrian / Bicycle, Transit, and Safety
- ▶ Alternative Components
  - Individual alternative components that can be layered upon each other to develop full concepts
  - First-level screening will be applied to alternative components
  - Alternative components relate to vehicular, transit, and ped/bike infrastructure
- ▶ Combined Examples
  - Examples of combined alternatives with different alternative components layered together
  - There can be many different combined alternatives depending on which alternative components are layered together

### *Supportive Elements: Pedestrian / Bicycles*

- ▶ Supportive elements are design features that should be considered in all alternatives
- ▶ Pedestrians / Bicycles
  - Identify opportunities for separated bicycle lanes
  - Create ped/bike connections on Centre Street and Galen Street
  - Develop new connections to the Charles River pathways
  - Explore bicycle infrastructure that could bypass Newton Corner, such as on Church Street
- ▶ Placemaking
  - Create a pedestrian environment that emphasizes Newton Corner as a destination and encourages community gathering and support of small businesses

### *Supportive Elements: Transit*

- ▶ Supportive elements are design features that should be considered in all alternatives
- ▶ Transit
  - Implement transit signal priority at signalized intersections
  - Enhance connections to existing bus services
  - Create dedicated bus lanes
  - Consider creating contraflow bus-only lanes
  - Install wayfinding / signage

### *Supportive Elements: Safety*

- ▶ Supportive elements are design features that should be considered in all alternatives
- ▶ Safety
  - Employ conventional intersection designs to reduce driver confusion
  - Consider installing roundabouts to reduce the number of conflict points
  - Construct accessible pedestrian accommodations
  - Improve lighting to increase visibility at night
- ▶ These supportive elements were identified as part of Road Safety Audits (RSAs) conducted in the study area

### *Alternative Components*

- ▶ 16 potential Alternative Components are shown for reference
- ▶ Additional Alternative Components are likely to be developed based on feedback from the Working Group and the public
- ▶ Individual alternative components that can be layered upon each other to develop full concepts will be presented at the next meeting

### *Alternative Components 1: Two-Directional Travel in Newton Corner*

To minimize weaving and increase safety:

- 1 Consider providing bi-directional vehicular travel on roads in Newton Corner
- 2 Maintain the current bridge locations

### *Alternative Components 2: Install Roundabouts*

- 1 Convert existing intersections to roundabout control
- 2 Seek opportunities to minimize weaving, increase safety, and simplify intersection operations

### *Alternative Components 3: New Bridge Connecting Centre Street*

- 1 New bridge with bi-directional travel connecting Centre Street north and south of I-90
- 2 Can provide multimodal accommodations on the new bridge for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists
- 3 Restore historical roadway network of Newton Corner

### *Alternative Components 4: Relocated I-90 Westbound On-Ramp*

- 1 Construct new I-90 Westbound On-Ramp west of Newton Corner
- 2 Close the current On-Ramp in Newton Corner, simplifying intersection operations

Note: location of new on-ramp shown for graphical purposes. Preferred location could be shifted east or west of location shown



*Alternative Components 5: Relocated I-90 Eastbound Off-Ramp*

- 1 Construct new I-90 Eastbound Off-Ramp west of Newton Corner, providing longer queueing space on the ramp
- 2 Close the current Off-Ramp in Newton Corner, simplifying intersection operations
- 3 Realign Richardson Street to connect through to Centre Avenue
- 4 Any potential right-of-way impacts will be evaluated

Note: location of new on-ramp shown for graphical purposes. Preferred location could be shifted east or west of location shown.

*Alternative Components 6: Close or Repurpose Washington Street Westbound Bridge*

- 1 Close or repurpose the existing Washington Street westbound bridge
- 2 Simplify operations at the intersections north and south of the existing bridge
- 3 Potential repurposing could include dedicated transitway or ped/bike bridge
- 4 Likely would need to implement this component with a new bridge connecting Centre Street

*Alternative Components 7: Bus Transit Hub in Newton Corner*

- 1 New mobility hub providing passengers with a comfortable place to wait and connecting bus service with additional mobility elements (i.e. Bluebikes station, bike parking)
- 2 Provide hubs in each direction by decking over I-90
- 3 Create a safe pedestrian crossing to connect inbound and outbound platforms

Note: This concept shows one potential alternative for a transit hub. There are different layers of options for transit hubs depending on other alternative components.

*Alternative Components 8: Potential Commuter Rail Station in Newton Corner*

- 1 Potential new Commuter Rail station in Newton Corner
- 2 Access could be provided on both sides of Newton Corner, with pedestrian and bicycle connections to the neighborhoods north and south of I-90
- 3 Connections could be provided to local MBTA bus routes

Note: location of potential future Commuter Rail station shown for graphical purposes. Preferred potential location could be shifted east or west of location shown

*Alternative Components 9: Air-rights / Decking over I-90*

- 1 Deck over I-90 to provide space for multimodal uses, bike path, transit bus stop, mobility hub, additional green space, and/or community space
- 2 Create a Village Center in Newton Corner and provide a more welcoming environment for small businesses

*Alternative Components 10: Close or Repurpose Washington Street Eastbound Bridge*

- 1 Close or repurpose the existing Washington Street eastbound bridge
- 2 Removes vehicular weaving and conflict between Washington Street and I-90 Eastbound Off-Ramp
- 3 Potential repurposing could include ped/bike bridge or dedicated transitway
- 4 Likely would need to implement this component with a new bridge connecting Centre Street

*Alternative Components 11: Pedestrian / Bicycle Bridge over I-90 in Newton Corner*

- 1 New pedestrian and bicycle bridge over I-90 providing a separated facility connecting the north and south sides of Newton Corner
- 2 New signalized crosswalks across Washington Street connecting to Centre Street north and south

*Alternative Components 12: Neighborhood Greenway on Charlesbank Road*

- 1 Create a neighborhood greenway along Charlesbank Road connecting Newton Corner to the Charles River, in close walking and biking distance.

*Alternative Components 13: Shared-Use Path on St. James Street*

- 1 Convert St. James Street to one-way
- 2 Construct a shared-use path along St. James Street to connect Newton Corner to the Charles River
- 3 Alternative: provide a ped/bike connection through St. James Terrace to Nonantum Road
- 4 Reconstruct intersection of St. James Street at Washington Street with new signalized crossings

*Alternative Components 14: Pedestrian / Bicycle Bridge to Charles River*

- 1 New pedestrian and bicycle bridge approximately 1/3 mile in length connecting Newton Corner to the Charles River
- 2 Western end of bridge connect to reconstructed intersection of St. James Street at Washington Street with new signalized crossings
- 3 Eastern end of bridge connect to Nonantum Road west of Charlesbank Road

*Alternative Components 15: Full Interstate Access at West Newton*

- 1 Construct full interstate access at West Newton (Eastbound Off-Ramp and Westbound On-Ramp)
- 2 Provides additional access to/from the west relieving reliance on Newton Corner interchange

*Alternative Components 16: New Interstate Access in Brighton (at DCR Roadway Area)*

- 1 Construct interstate access at DCR Roadway Area to relieve reliance on Newton Corner interchange
- 2 Could include full interstate access or partial interstate access
- 3 Would result in additional traffic on DCR parkways which does not align with DCR's vision for the region's parkways

- 4 Potential impact to DCR property including protected parkland.

#### *Combined Examples*

- ▶ 3 potential Combined Examples are shown for reference
- ▶ Additional Combined Examples can be developed layering together different Alternative Components

#### *Preliminary Combined Examples A: Two-Directional Travel on Existing Roadway Network with Roundabouts*

- 1 Provide bi-directional travel on all roads in Newton Corner
- 2 Maintain the current bridge locations
- 3 Consider roundabouts to minimize weaving, increase safety, and simplify intersection configuration
- 4 Consider reallocating right of way for non-vehicular modes

#### *Preliminary Combined Examples B: New Roadway Network with Centre St Bridge + Relocated I-90 On-Ramp*

- 1 New bridge with bi-directional travel reconnecting Centre Street
- 2 Close the existing I-90 westbound on-ramp and relocate to the west
- 3 Repurpose the existing Washington Street eastbound bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists only
- 4 Repurpose the existing Washington Street westbound bridge as a transitway and bus hub
- 5 Convert Washington Street north and south of I-90 to two-way travel
- 6 Create a neighborhood greenway connecting to the Charles River

#### *Preliminary Combined Examples C: New Network with Centre St Bridge + Potential CR Station + Decking*

- 1 New bridge with bi-directional travel reconnecting Centre Street
- 2 Convert Washington Street north and south of I-90 to two-way travel
- 3 Close the existing I-90 westbound on-ramp and relocate to the west
- 4 Repurpose the existing Washington Street eastbound bridge for buses
- 5 Potential new Commuter Rail station
- 6 Add decking over I-90 with a shared-use path and green space
- 7 Construct a shared-use path

#### *Breakout Session*

- ▶ Attendees will be divided into breakout rooms with study team facilitators
- ▶ Each room will discuss the alternative ideas presented
- ▶ Facilitators will take notes
- ▶ Breakout rooms will last up to 30 minutes
- ▶ Everyone will be invited back to the main meeting to discuss work in progress and next steps

### Breakout Room Discussion

- ▶ Do you have any additional examples from other communities or other Newton villages that you think we should consider?
- ▶ What innovative transportation solutions would you like to consider that we haven't discussed yet?
- ▶ Is there anything else you would like to share about your vision or concerns regarding transportation improvements in Newton?

### Schedule and Next Steps

#### Study Schedule



### Conclusion

#### How to Reach Us

- ▶ Study Website / Contact Information: <https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-long-term-planning-study>
- ▶ Virtual Meeting Room: <https://vmr.vhb.com/v/E118wZWNqOB>
- ▶ Patrick Snyder, Project Manager [patrick.l.snyder@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:patrick.l.snyder@dot.state.ma.us)

## Breakout Room Discussion

*The below comments and questions include those from both Working Group members and attendees.*

### *Breakout Room #1 (Moderated by Matt Duranleau)*

- ▶ Councilor Alison Leary (City of Newton) voiced support for the Commuter Rail station and decking alternatives. She added that bicycle connections are also important.
- ▶ Jason Santos of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) noted DCR is currently redesigning the IHOP rotary (Soldiers Field Road and North Beacon Street intersection). The intersection design will better accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, but it likely cannot accommodate additional vehicles if new I-90 ramps are constructed.
- ▶ Ned Codd (City of Newton) said he was happy to see the Commuter Rail station was included. He added that when considering combinations of alternatives, the themes and components will need to have internal logic and synergy.
- ▶ Henry Barbaro expected that certain alternatives with greatest benefit will rise to the top during alternatives analysis phase. He also wondered if there is a cost limitation.
- ▶ Rob Lowell (DCR) said he did not believe St. James Street was wide enough for one-way vehicle travel and a two-way shared use path. He also noted that there is no defined crossing at St James Terrace, but there is an unofficial one that people use today. It is currently not in DCR's planning to add a crossing at this location.
- ▶ Councilor John Oliver (City of Newton) asked about two-way vehicle travel shown in Alternative Component 1. He said he supports the idea of a Commuter Rail station and decking, but he needed to understand more about the benefits of two-way travel before supporting. He also wondered if there would be bicycle lanes in addition to the two-way travel.
  - Ned Codd suggested that not all roadways would be able to have two-way travel. Roadway geometry and operations would need to be explored.
- ▶ Councilor Alison Leary said there need to be opportunities to mitigate the impacts of climate change. She said the area has a lot of heat island areas, so the study team should consider opportunities to preserve or create more parkland and decrease the amount of impervious areas. She also said it was important to facilitate a new village center.
- ▶ Lucia Dolan asked how the decking component might impact traffic flow.
- ▶ Councilor Alison Leary asked if there are other locations where new greenspaces have been built over highways.
  - Rob Lowell noted this has been done over I-93 in Milton.
  - Councilor John Oliver said the Rose Kennedy Greenway in Boston over the Big Dig is another example.
- ▶ Councilor Alison Leary said wildlife corridors could also be considered. She said wildlife (e.g., deer, foxes) seems to have increased relative to 30 years ago.
- ▶ Ned Codd said he would like to see the existing conditions data and analysis.

*Breakout Room #2 (Moderated by Michael Ahillen)*

- ▶ Robin Boger (Newton Corner Neighborhood Association) shared concerns about the multiple layers of decisions. She noted that changes to I-90 would have impacts to Newton Corner and other areas. She requested additional context on when the most important decisions would be made.
  - Michael Ahillen recommended this question be asked among the larger group during the public comment period. He noted that regional and local impacts would be evaluated in alternatives analysis. He encouraged brainstorming solutions and that the study team is not at the stage where options are being eliminated.
- ▶ Zeke Mermell (City of Watertown) encouraged the study team to consider connections to and from Watertown. He noted that the side streets to the west of Centre Street/Galen Street offer opportunities to link up with the infrastructure proposed in the presentation. He said it is important to consider how active transportation infrastructure will link up to the surrounding areas.
- ▶ Ward Councilor Julia Malakie (City of Newton) expressed concerns about funding a new rail station. She also noted that many Newton properties were purchased through right-of-way acquisitions for the Massachusetts Turnpike when I-90 was extended through Newton. Regarding the alternatives, she requested that property impacts be taken into account.
  - Michael Ahillen noted that potential right-of-way impacts will be taken into account as alternatives advance into alternatives analysis.
- ▶ Rufen Liao (Resident) expressed the desire to center recommendations on safety for all roadway users. She also expressed the need for additional publicity for the study to attract additional input. She suggested a poster for people to comment on.
- ▶ Representative Amy Sangiolo raised concerns about the preliminary combined concepts all showing Washington Street as bidirectional. She asked if a new Commuter Rail station in Newton Corner is a viable option. She expressed concerns about advancing this alternative as an option if funding might not be available.
  - Sandy Johnston (MBTA) explained that this long-term study will be looking at the Commuter Rail station from a conceptual level and will help determine if a station should be a consideration going forward.
- ▶ Robin Boger asked about what the plans for the Bus Hub entail. She noted the potential economic development benefits and asked if bus frequency has increased since the pandemic.
  - Sandy Johnston said his understanding is that bus frequency has increased since the pandemic, and he encouraged participants to review the Bus Network Redesign map to give participants a sense of future operations.
- ▶ Zeke Mermell voiced support for Preliminary Combined Example B, as it could allow for an increase in the number of people able to cross over I-90 and could offer beneficial transit connections to Watertown.
- ▶ Robin Boger suggested the study team consider Skywalk/pedestrian bridges like those in Minnesota and Minneapolis be considered, for safer options for pedestrians to cross I-90.
- ▶ Annie Mazzola (Office of Senator Will Brownsberger) said she is pleased to see the focus on alternatives that benefit pedestrians. She asked about the new traffic configuration pertaining to the recent Exit 127 construction (Fall 2024).
  - Niki Hastings said she would provide her the contact information for that project.
- ▶ Sophia Gallimore (Watertown TMA) asked if the study team had considered private shuttle services. She said there have been conversations about linking shuttles from Watertown to Newton.

- Michael Ahillen confirmed that this is a consideration.
- ▶ Robin Boger asked about the advantages of roundabouts.
  - Michael Ahillen noted the safety benefits of roundabouts compared to signalized intersections.

*Breakout Room #3 (Moderated by Michael Gordon)*

- ▶ Schulyer Larabee asked if the presentation would be posted.
  - Niki Hastings (VHB) said it would be.
- ▶ Schulyer Larabee noted that the idea of two-way traffic is interesting, as is the idea of connecting Centre Street with a bridge. The angle of the bridge would require users connecting from Washington Street eastbound to I-90 eastbound to move in a “Z” along the Centre Street Bridge.
  - Niki Hastings added that the concepts were shown for graphical purposes and that the alignments could be refined. She said she understood the concern about the potential to add travel distance.
- ▶ Councilor Pam Wright (City of Newton) expressed concerns about funding for all the alternatives. She asked if the study team could provide cost estimates for each of the items included in the alternatives.
  - Niki Hastings noted that the alternatives presented at the end of the study will have conceptual level cost estimates.
- ▶ Councilor Pam Wright noted that moving I-90 eastbound entrance has topography concerns. It may also require taking property at the YMCA, where the parking lot is heavily used.
- ▶ Schulyer Larabee noted a concern with two-way traffic on Centre Street north of Richardson Street. He added a concern for traffic flow along Washington Street (eastbound), Church Street (southbound), and Centre Street.
- ▶ Madelyn Sorensen said Storrow Drive and Soldiers Field Road is a location where pedestrians and bicyclists can move without impediments. She said there are safety concerns along St. James Street where pedestrians and bicyclists mix with cars.
- ▶ David Koses (City of Newton) reiterated concerns about potential property impacts to the YMCA. He said as a long-term study, it is important to look at the ideas, even if not yet tied to funding. He referenced the need to consider air rights and the Commuter Rail station to determine the feasibility. He suggested a concept that includes an elevated walkway from Washington Street from the north side through the hotel main entrance. He suggested an option that includes an elevated pedestrian walkway over Washington Street on the south side into a potential development on the Richardson Street lot.
- ▶ Michael Halle (Newton Transportation Advisory Committee) said that it is important to see West Newton and Auburndale made accessible. He suggested that the north-south connection is stronger than at Newtonville, so it is worth spending the time to understand how difficult the transit solutions would be. He asked how bicycle and pedestrian movements across potential roundabouts would work. He said that a roundabout does not include pedestrian connections. He suggested a HAWK signal or RRFB, although noted these could create vehicle queues.
- ▶ Joan Belle Isle frequents the area daily. She noted two-way traffic could be difficult, especially if roundabouts were added.
- ▶ Schulyer Larabee suggested a roundabout over I-90 would allow north-south connections for Washington Street, Centre Street, and others. He also supported moving the westbound I-90 entrance to the west.



- ▶ Michael Halle said Carmel, Indiana, has examples of peanut roundabouts. This might be an option that could be decked over I-90.
- ▶ Madelyn Sorensen was interested in the potential for Brighton highway access/egress, which could alleviate some of the volumes at Newton Corner.
- ▶ Joan Belle Isle commented that decking over I-90 offers a lot of opportunity for different land uses.
- ▶ Councilor Pam Wright asked about coordination with other municipalities. She asked if the team has origin-destination data. She suggested that a six percent increase in vehicle traffic between 2019 and 2050 was lower than expected.

*Breakout Room #4 (Moderated by Christine Trearchis)*

- ▶ Michael Pavan noted that the alternatives do not appear to include proposals to reduce traffic. He suggested new options in Brighton be explored, including an eastbound exit near Brook Street and a westbound exit at Leo Birmingham Parkway. He noted that adding an eastbound off-ramp in West Newton is logical, but suggested a westbound on-ramp may not be used by many. He suggested that the eastbound off-ramp at Newton Corner needs a second or third lane if alternatives to reduce traffic were not included. He noted that Preliminary Combined Examples A and B require people to “zig-zag” through Newton Corner and do not consider the continuity of Washington Street. He supported the Commuter Rail station and recommended placing it alongside the bus access. He also thought the relocation of entrance ramps at Newton Corner could work.
  - Christine Trearchis said these concepts and ideas are preliminary and intended to spark conversation. She said she appreciated the feedback and would take these ideas into consideration.
- ▶ Dennis Rieske (Newton resident) said he had reviewed previous studies that included an expanded roundabout option. He indicated major property owners he has spoken to are supportive of this option. He was interested in the decking over I-90 component. He added that there are four or five development sites that could house a Commuter Rail station.
- ▶ Nate Gibson said he is supportive of the decking option and is mostly focused on options that reconnect the neighborhood. He has a strong interest in Newton Corner becoming walkable. He said there are students who need to take the bus from one side of Newton Corner to the other. He said most alternatives are focused on vehicles, and he would like to see more options focused on walkability and the Commuter Rail station.
- ▶ Dana Hanson (Office of Congressman Jake Auchincloss) thanked the study team for this opportunity and the participants for their input and stated that Congressman Auchincloss’ office can be a resource to the study team and the public.
- ▶ Jenn Martin (City of Newton) supported the decking options that tie the neighborhood back together and improve the feel of Newton Corner.
- ▶ Wenzheng Wang (City of Boston) supported reconnecting Centre Street and decking options. He thinks there should be a greater focus on placemaking. He noted that the alternatives that add access in Brighton would require significant coordination. He said the City of Boston is currently working with DCR on Leo Birmingham Parkway, and adding I-90 access in this area could be challenging.
  - Christine Trearchis said that the study team is coordinating with DCR regarding any alternatives with access in Brighton.
- ▶ Jini Fairley (City of Newton) expressed interest in north-south connections either with a bridge or decking, but she suggested separation between cyclists and pedestrians. She said it is difficult for people



with disabilities to avoid bike lanes unless there is separation. She added that she would like more direct pedestrian routes to cross north-south for people using wheelchairs.

- Christine Trearchis noted that when considering accessibility, the study team is looking beyond the bare minimum.
  - Patrick Snyder added that the type of bicycle facility will be identified in future meetings as the alternatives advance.
- Nate Gibson asked for traffic projections.
- Patrick Snyder noted that the future traffic projections were only recently finalized, and he will investigate what can be provided.
- Wenzheng Wang asked for the rationale regarding the Commuter Rail station location and the Bus Hub.
- Christine Trearchis noted that the Commuter Rail station and the Bus Hub alternatives are separate. The Commuter Rail station is shown conceptually in the preferred location by MBTA. She said these alternatives are conceptual and not an indication of exactly where and how big the stations would be. Those details will be fleshed out through coordination with MBTA as alternatives advance. The Bus Hub was shown in a location that aligns with the Route 57 bus route, which is a priority bus route for MBTA.
- Dennis Rieske noted that he is already looking at potential development sites. He suggested the Commuter Rail station may need to be on the north side because that is where the tracks are located. He said that in reviewing historic maps from 1917, Preliminary Combined Example C is similar to what used to be there.
- Wenzheng Wang advised against rotaries in this area due to the high traffic volumes; traffic control may be more feasible. He added that the Route 2 rotaries in Cambridge can be congested. Regarding St. James Street, he voiced support for the idea that the study team is trying to establish another connection, but he noted the grade challenges to consider.
- Michael Pavan asked when the presented alternatives will be available.
- Christine Trearchis said the slides will be available on the study website soon.

### Working Group Questions and Discussion

- Following the presentation, Patrick Snyder asked members of the Working Group to share their feedback.
- Robin Boger asked about the order of the decision-making process and impact of different alternatives. She said it might be premature to consider different bridge alternatives without understanding the greater transportation context.
- Patrick Snyder said the purpose of this meeting has been to get feedback from members of the Working Group. After the next public meeting, the study team will move into alternatives analysis, at which point impacts will be evaluated. The travel demand model will be used in this process will help the study team understand regional impacts on the transportation network.
  - Christine Trearchis added that the study team will carry out a first-level screening of alternatives, intended to identify any fatal flaws. From there, six distinct alternatives will be developed. Each alternative will go through alternatives analysis against evaluation criteria established earlier in the study.
- Ned Codd said he appreciated the inclusion of the Commuter Rail station. He is interested to hear thoughts about how these components are put together into packages and decisions will be made about the individual components. He added that the study website does not have an existing conditions report.

He noted that if the study team is considering changing traffic directionality, he would like to know more information about traffic flows.

- Patrick Snyder said he will look into this.
- ▶ Representative Amy Sangiolo asked if there will be a meeting summary. In her breakout room, she raised concerns about the two-way Washington Street component that appeared in each of the Preliminary Combined Examples. She is also concerned about the feasibility of a Commuter Rail station.
  - Patrick Snyder said that the study team will explore feasibility as they move into alternatives analysis. In terms of the Commuter Rail station, since this idea has come up at every meeting so far, the study team is exploring its feasibility. Regarding Washington Street, no preferred alternatives have been identified. In terms of materials from breakout rooms, a summary of the meeting and breakout room discussions will be available on the study website.

### Public Comment Period

- ▶ Rufen Liao said safety is a critical goal and should be the focus of this effort. She also said she would like to see more information. She said residents need to know what is being studied and analyzed. She recommended a poster posted in the study area so residents can comment. She said she does not know where to go to get information. She expressed concerns about people who could not attend because they are working.
  - Councilor Alison Leary noted that Newton City Councilors attend meetings. She said Rufen Liao could contact any of the councilors, who can assist with her concerns.
  - Patrick Snyder noted the study website, virtual meeting room, and his email address.
- ▶ Madelyn Sorensen suggested most of the traffic and growth will occur in the Allston-Brighton area. She asked if the study team had considered the impact of each alternative on traffic in Newton Corner, compared to the other study areas.
  - Matt Duranleau said the full traffic analysis will occur in the next stage of the project and will be based on the 2050 future conditions model.

Patrick Snyder clarified the study team will analyze the potential impacts of alternatives on Newton Corner.

### Conclusion

### *How to Reach Us*

- ▶ Study Website / Contact Information:
  - <https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-long-term-planning-study>
- ▶ Virtual Meeting Room:
  - <https://vmr.vhb.com/v/E118wZWNqOB>
- ▶ Patrick Snyder, Project Manager
  - [patrick.l.snyder@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:patrick.l.snyder@dot.state.ma.us)

### *Thank You*

- ▶ Study Website:
  - <https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-long-term-planning-study>
- ▶ Patrick Snyder, Project Manager

- [patrick.l.snyder@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:patrick.l.snyder@dot.state.ma.us)